

Taoiseach, may good fortune be yours, may your joys never end, may good luck be with you wherever you go, and your blessings outnumber the shamrocks that grow. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:38 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland, who presented the shamrocks; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

### **Statement on Senate Action on Legislation To Ban Partial-Birth Abortion** *March 13, 2003*

Partial-birth abortion is an abhorrent procedure that offends human dignity, and I commend the Senate for passing legislation to ban it. Today's action is an important step toward building a culture of life in

America. I look forward to the House passing legislation and working with the Senate to resolve any differences so that I can sign legislation banning partial-birth abortion into law.

### **Statement on Senate Action To Block a Vote on the Nomination of Miguel Estrada To Be a United States Circuit Judge** *March 13, 2003*

Today, 42 Senate Democrats have decided to continue their filibuster to block a vote on the nomination of Miguel Estrada. The Senate has a constitutional responsibility to hold an up-or-down vote on all judicial nominees within a reasonable time, but some Senate Democrats have abandoned that responsibility in favor of partisan obstructionist tactics. The judicial confirmation process is broken, and the consequences for the American people are real. Because of the Senate's failure to hold timely votes, the number of judicial vacancies has become unacceptably high. When the Federal courts are understaffed, they

cannot act in a timely manner to resolve disputes that affect the lives and liberties of all Americans.

In order to protect the rights of Americans and the sanctity of the Constitution, this obstruction must end. Miguel Estrada was nominated nearly 2 years ago, yet he still has not received a fair vote. I call on the Senate to end the delays, stop holding Miguel Estrada to a double standard, and live up to its responsibility to hold an up-or-down vote on this highly qualified nominee. As I said before, let each Senator vote as he or she thinks best, but give the man a vote.

### **Statement on House of Representatives Action on Health Care Legislation** *March 13, 2003*

America's medical liability system is badly broken. Frivolous and abusive law-

suits are driving up costs for patients, threatening access to quality health care,

and forcing good doctors to shut down clinics in communities across the Nation.

We need a medical liability system that provides compensation for patients, not windfalls for trial lawyers. The direct and indirect costs of the liability crisis to the Federal Government is more than \$28 billion a year, adding to the costs of Medicare and Medicaid and hurting our efforts to help people get access to the medical care they need.

Today's House vote is an important step toward creating a liability system that fairly compensates those who are truly harmed, punishes egregious misconduct without

driving good doctors out of medicine, and improves access to quality, affordable health care by reducing health care costs.

I also commend the House for passing legislation that improves patient safety by providing for better sharing of valuable medical expertise between health care professionals. Together, these two pieces of legislation will make the system work for patients.

I urge the Senate to move quickly on legislation that will reform our medical liability system and reduce medical errors so that I can sign these important measures into law this year.

## Remarks on the Roadmap for Peace in the Middle East *March 14, 2003*

Good morning. We have reached a hopeful moment for progress toward the vision of Middle Eastern peace that I outlined last June. I spoke of a day when two states, Israel and Palestine, will live side by side in peace and security. I called upon all parties in the Middle East to abandon old hatreds and to meet their responsibilities for peace.

The Palestinian state must be a reformed and peaceful and democratic state that abandons forever the use of terror. The Government of Israel, as the terror threat is removed and security improves, must take concrete steps to support the emergence of a viable and credible Palestinian state and to work as quickly as possible toward a final status agreement. As progress is made toward peace, settlement activity in the occupied territories must end. And the Arab states must oppose terrorism, support the emergence of a peaceful and democratic Palestine, and state clearly that they will live in peace with Israel.

This moment offers a new opportunity to meet these objectives. After its recent elections, the nation of Israel has a new

Government. And the Palestinian Authority has created the new position of Prime Minister. Israeli and Palestinian leaders and other governments in the region now have a chance to move forward with determination and with good faith.

To be a credible and responsible partner, the new Palestinian Prime Minister must hold a position of real authority. We expect that such a Palestinian Prime Minister will be confirmed soon. Immediately upon confirmation, the roadmap for peace will be given to the Palestinians and the Israelis. This roadmap will set forth a sequence of steps toward the goals I set out on June 24th, 2002, goals shared by all the parties.

The United States has developed this plan over the last several months in close cooperation with Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. Once this roadmap is delivered, we will expect and welcome contributions from Israel and the Palestinians to this document that will advance true peace. We will urge them to discuss the roadmap with one another. The time has come to move beyond entrenched